

## Tied Up Over Troop Tribute

By KEITH L. MARTIN

Moving tribute or a tribute that needs to be moved?

That's the question facing the town after the recent discovery of a memorial to those killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom located in the woods near the Round Pond Trails off Mayflower Street.

The "Indian Path of Reflections" is located off the yellow walking trail at Round Pond and features dozens of yellow ribbons listing the names and ages of U.S. troops who were killed in battle since the conflict began. A walk through the path also includes white ribbons in recognition of the 4,000 soldiers wounded in

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**PATRIOTIC PUZZLER:** Deep in the woods near Round Pond, dozens of yellow ribbons honoring soldiers and others killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom are tied to tree trunks. Despite the tribute, town officials say no one asked their permission to put up the impromptu memorial and may take it down.

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Iraq and the 10,000 Iraqi civilians killed as well as ribbons to honor those who died on September 11, 2001 and soldiers from other countries who have also lost their life.

While the man-made memorial features nearly 100 names, the one name missing is the person responsible for creating the tribute. No one seems to know who has gone through all the effort to honor these soldiers, including officials at Town Hall who say no one ever approached them about using the land for such a purpose.

The ownership of the land dates back to the 1890s when the Rural Society, the precursor to the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, began to buy parts of the land, amassing nearly 50 acres. In the 1980s, the society worked with the Massachusetts Audubon Society to develop walking trails and as more land was bought by the town for conservation, the trails were extended to the seven miles that exist today.

Town Manager Rocco Longo said he has seen the memorial and that while it is "very nice" and a lot of work on the part of whoever created it, the ribbons were hung without the authority of the town or the Society.

"I respect the [intent of the memorial], so we'll leave it for a while," he said. "I'm a little taken aback because no one got permission to do this. There are lots of ways to express free speech, but this is in an area where...it may not be viewed by many or understood."

Longo said there has been vandalism in that area of the trails in the past and feared that someone might do something to the ribbons seeing as they are unsupervised. He added that the town has "mixed emotions" about what to do next regarding their presence at Round Pond.



Among the other ribbons found on the trees of the memorial are three dedicated to Iraqi daughters and sons, grandmothers and grandfathers and brothers and sisters.

"I've had mixed emotions," he said. "In my heart, I feel good...but at the same time no one sought permission to do it."

Conservation Administrator Joe Grady said he recently walked the area with Longo and is upset about the anonymous tribute being located on property belonging to the town.

"I don't think this is the appropriate place for it and an appropriate use of public land," he said. "There are proper channels to go through. Although the land is wooded and appears to be vacant, there are rules and regulations...and I'm disappointed someone put this up without the permission of the land owner, who in this case is the town."

Grady said no one called his office about placing the ribbons and that Boy Scout groups often check with the conservation department before camping on the property, so he is perplexed why someone would feel it was okay to hang the ribbons on the Round Pond trees.

"I'm not sure what to do about it," he said. "I don't want to show disrespect for those who gave their life in the war, so we haven't really decided what to do."

One decision Grady's office did make was contacting the Duxbury Police Department about the legality of the ribbons and whether "it could be considered graffiti," he said.

Grady said the department's recommendation was to find the person responsible and discuss the matter with them on the best way to

the *Clipper* to encourage the person to help find an appropriate place for the ribbons.

Grady added that many families use the trails around Round Pond to walk on and that younger people might be "spooked" by the ribbons or find their content "unnerving."

"I just don't think it is the appropriate place for this display," he said. "The memorial is moving, but some might say this is a political statement, so I'm perplexed about what to do at this point."

Patrick Browne, executive director of the Society, said that he recently went out to Round Pond to view the ribbons and after speaking with Grady, determined that it was part of the town's property. Browne added that it was the consensus thought of the two that the trees along the path "are not really the appropriate place" for the memorial and that it would be up to the town to determine its future.

#### Walkers Find Tribute Appropriate

While town officials will have to debate the future of the memorial, there are those in town who find it inspirational as it stands.

Bill Morse of Kingston said he often walks his dog, Lucy, along the trails and one day spotted a few specks of yellow in the distance before discovering the ribbons.

"I kind of discovered it by accident a couple months ago," he said. "It is just overwhelming

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The names of soldiers aged 18 and 19 killed in battle are marked with a special star next to their name as part of the memorial.

## Memorial Mystery

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when you look at it and I think it's great."

Morse said that he has no idea who created the tribute, but that it is "definitely patriotic" and something he visits regularly now while walking Lucy.

High Street resident Susan Curtis said she also discovered the ribbons during a walk along the trails and what began as curiosity soon became an awe struck stroll.

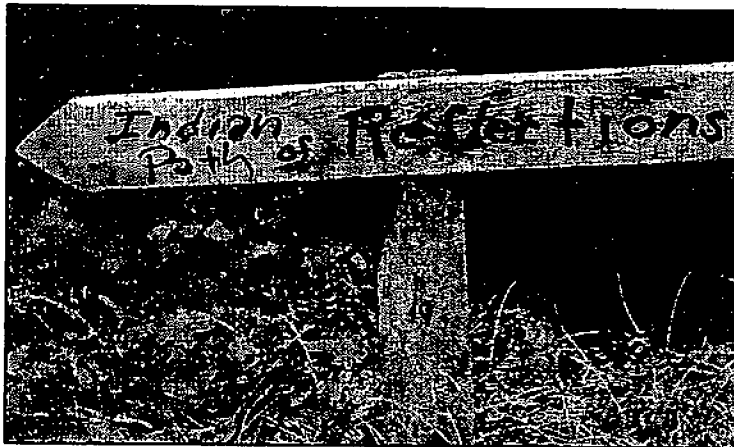
"When I started [along the path], I thought, 'oh, this is nice,' but as I walked, I got more and more moved," she said. "It is very powerful and as I exited, I thought if all these trees were gone, what the forest would be like with-

out them and then I equated that to these soldiers not being around for their families anymore."

Curtis said that the ribbons really make you think about how important life is and the efforts of soldiers overseas and recommends others walk the trail for themselves.

American Legion Commander Bill Newman said that he has not seen the memorial and that discussion of it has not come up among members of Post 223, but that he thinks the gesture "is done in good faith."

"I think whoever's done this will come forward and perhaps if they tell their intentions for doing it, they can get some help [from those who want to take it down]," he said.



To see the memorial, follow the yellow trail off Mayflower Street until you see this sign indicating the beginning of the Indian Path of Reflections.